

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, August 20, 1893, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. THE WINDSOR, Montreal, Aug. 20th 1893. My dear Mrs. Bell:

I am going to try and write to you oftener. It's a shame I haven't done so, but time does fly in Baddeck.

It is delightful having these few days with Mamma and Papa, and of course I am enjoying every moment with them.

Alec and I met them at the Crossman House, Alexandria Bay on the St. Lawrence River. I wish you and Mr. Bell would come up to Baddeck and would come up via the St. Lawrence. The situation of the Crossman House is the loveliest on the river. Nearly all of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence are dotted about within fifty miles of the hotel and it is a most fascinating experience to steam as we did in and out among the islands sometimes just squeezing through two islands almost near enough to jump to, and sometimes rounding one only to find another right ahead. The experience is something like the one we had at Lake George last year, only there is more of it here. The contrast between the American and Canadian islands was very marked, the former nearly all improved and built upon, and the latter wild and deserted. The American islands are so valuable that one little heap of rocks opposite the hotel was bought and big boat loads of rocks dumped all around the original rocks and earth piled on and all held in place by a stone wall, and now you have a fine new island with lawns and trees and a fine house and stable. Only I couldn't think what they wanted of a stable on an island about big enough for a good sized city lot!

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We staid at the Crossman two nights and then decided that we did not care for unlimited music and dancing and progressive euchre parties right outside our chamber door, and so moved up here. To do this we came down the St. Lawrence. I made the trip once before, on my wedding journey and I was very sentimentally regretful that Alec wasn't with me this time, but he had gone ahead to see if he could buy gunpowder in Montreal. Gypsie was tremendously excited and wished we could go on shooting rapids indefinitely. She quite won the young Captain's heart and he told her the best places from which to see the rocks, and all about a shipwreck last year. He discovered that his boat was on fire, and though he thought he could go on further in her, still as there was a rapid right ahead he deemed it most prudent to make for the shore at once. So he informed his passengers that the ship was on fire, but that there was no danger if they kept quiet. They all did with the exception of a bridal couple and two women. The bridal couple asked if there were much danger because the man could swim. The captain said he did not think there was much danger, but he could swim ashore if he liked and take the bride. So they decided to do so and the man was to jump in first and the bride come after. Well the groom filled his part, but the lady hesitated until the swain held out his arms and said "Come to me darling." Whereupon she hesitated no longer but jumped with so much force and so truly that she knocked him under. However they both came to the surface all right and reached the shore safely, but the Captain thought he never saw anything so ridiculous as those two arms reaching up out of the water. As for the two women, they wanted to jump overboard too, but the Captain thought enough was as good as a feast and caught 3 one woman with one arm and the other with the other and prevailed on them to stay. Finally the boat reached the shore, and two boats were lowered and lashed together, boards thrown across so as to make a gangway across which the people could walk to the shore. And said the Captain they all went ashore as quietly as if it were an ordinary landing, and not one trunk was lost although the boat burned to the water's edge in no time.

The old Indian pilot that has pilotted the steamers down the dangerous Lachine Rapids so many years died last September and a young French Canadian twenty-five years old has

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taken his place. He is really quite a handsome young fellow with blue eyes and jet black hair and eyebrows, and seemed to feel the responsibility of his position very keenly, but he carried us all safely through and then stood wiping the perspiration from his face, although it was quite a cool day.

I am in a great hurry to get home. I hear that there is quite a company there now, seven persons in all, my two children and their teacher Miss True, my cousin Lina McCurdy, Mr. McCurdy's little Susie and Niel Home. I don't know at all how all these different elements mix, or how well the children get on with Latin and grammer when a boy cousin is around, and I want to go and see.

However Alec hasn't got his gunpowder yet and thinks he must have one more day here and since Mamma stays I can have patience.

Alec seems to think perhaps you will go to Chicago. I do wish you would, you can't let Mr. Langley's mother be smarter than you, you know, and beside travelling is so luxurious now that I am sure you could go without too much fatigue, and even if you did no more than look at the buildings that alone would pay for the trip.

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I hope you are all quite well, give the cousins my love and with much for Mr. Bell and yourself.

Ever affectionately, Your daughter Mabel.